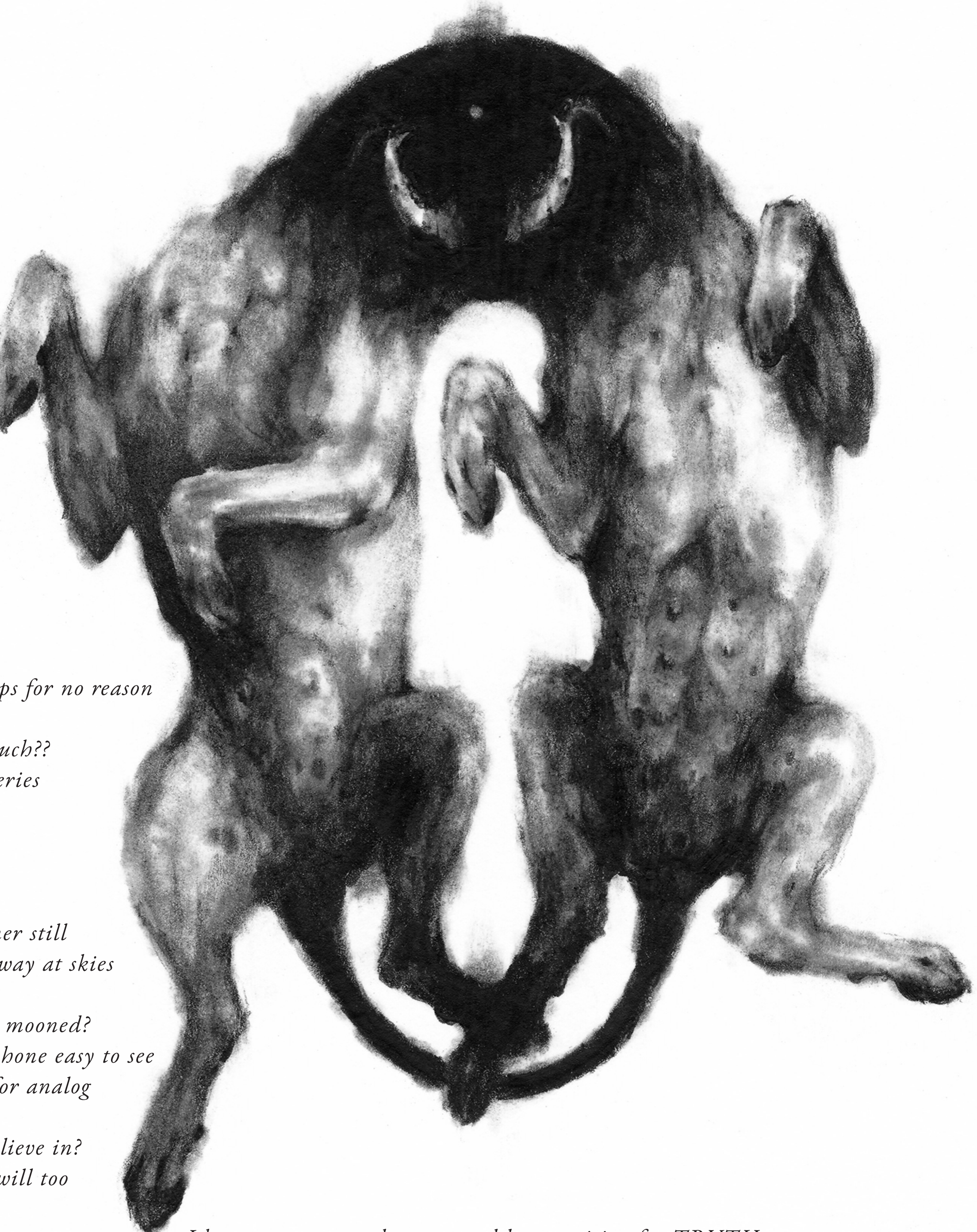
FINE PRINT

ISSUE FIFTEEN
FREE

A LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS PUBLICATION



DUSTIN RAY

R/MOONLESS
from THE HIGH HEAVEN
JOSHUA WHEELER

Does moonless mean you don't believe it tho
Moon is witchhunt
Moon is drugs
moon is vibes only
Will you even understand poetry anymore at all???
Moondeniers
Motherearthers
Flatmoonless
New Orleans city of freaks
Infectious???
This is disease of poverty
Obvious systemic inequality in moon
Why do you think billionaires have spaceships for no reason
Chemicals in water
Some weird cult where you are fucking each other like so much??
excited for inevitable ten-part docuseries
Do you hate NASA?
You hate America.
Make moon great again
Moonsplaining.
How can you help me please my own moon is dimmed oftener still
I have not cared for a very long time to look in any way at skies
Whoever honestly bothered
If I show you my ass do you see my ass now because you are mooned?
there's an app for that & it shows moon on your phone easy to see
noctalgia pod like masturbatorium for analog
Who is Gently?
I think it is so cool that you are so brave to say what you believe in?
because everything is already disappeared and you will too
Proof of simulation tbh
Disinformation.
Unfuck the simulacrum.
Just a phase.
the modern condition
The moon is a door wide open.
Vast nothingness portal for moonless only
Stone of the tomb rolled away.
Stone of the moon. Empty tomb.
Look up Virgin Mary!
saying moonless is quote/unquote a lady situation fml
it is literally the sistine chapel
actually, pauline chapel & assumption of mary
woman of apocalypse
Back when drugs were making people eat each others faces amirite
Guerilla marketing just wait a moonless mocktail next.
There will be a new pill soon to lose moon
Dumbest way to diet
Please say first moonless celebrity and why is it Kanye.
Actually this is every religious tradition
really these people are demons
End times again.
New pandemic dropped???
vaccine for moonl3ssn3ss is op3n your 3y3s?
NOPE not taking a government vaccine poison!
Viral marketing for horse paste in ass.
Guerilla marketing campaign for asses.
Buy ass, eat moon.
Interesting to think but these days who knows I will be looking to see
What is Izzy?
I have sawn moon close not real been waiting for TRUTH
They edited Wikipedia look it is not there
If a tree falls in the forest...can you even see moon
Moonlight does not increase predation the science is clear as the moon
Lunarphobes
Lunarphilia is for pervs
this is the beginning of world peace
So over the moonless.
To the moonless.
Shoot the moonless
Read any book fuckos!
Still moon in Tuscaloosa.
Still moon in Duluth.
Still moon at your momma's house
We got moon in the eye—Italy.
Is this a new war we've been waiting for
I have in my own community cases of cluster illnesses from pollution etc which is no joke how babies are born not even human I know this can happen BLAME president.
This is common for house pets actually like reptiles
Moon honestly no big deal since a while
no moon since music died.
Hasn't been moon since genocide
No moon since printing press
no moon since Elvis alive
No not since Plato's cave.
opposable thumb ruined moons
no moon since apple sauced Eve
No moon when dinosaur
Who is Izzy Gently?

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CATTLE MUTILATIONS

ROBBIE COBURN

No one else had touched you —

after you walked into the paddock's centre
and slept beneath the indifferent clouds,

an ache I couldn't identify
pressed your body against the earth.

as if an external force had inflicted
the mutilation across your wrists,

covering your eyes
and contorting the grasses
where your fingers had clawed at the soil —

your breath concealed somewhere,
inside a furrow unendingly
filling with dirt.

I can never ask you
how you could have done this to yourself.

MYTHMAKING

J. BRUCE FULLER

How I built him up tall in my mind,
scared at every step he took in my direction
til one day I squared my fifteen-year-old shoulders
and he said if I felt like a man to come and try it.

How I got ratted out one Friday night,
got busted smashing mailboxes
and throwing rocks through windshields
so he took me for a drive and told me
I wasn't never going back home now,
how I said in my calmest almost-grown voice
I'll burn your fucking house down
and how that time, he believed me, drove
me right back the same day.

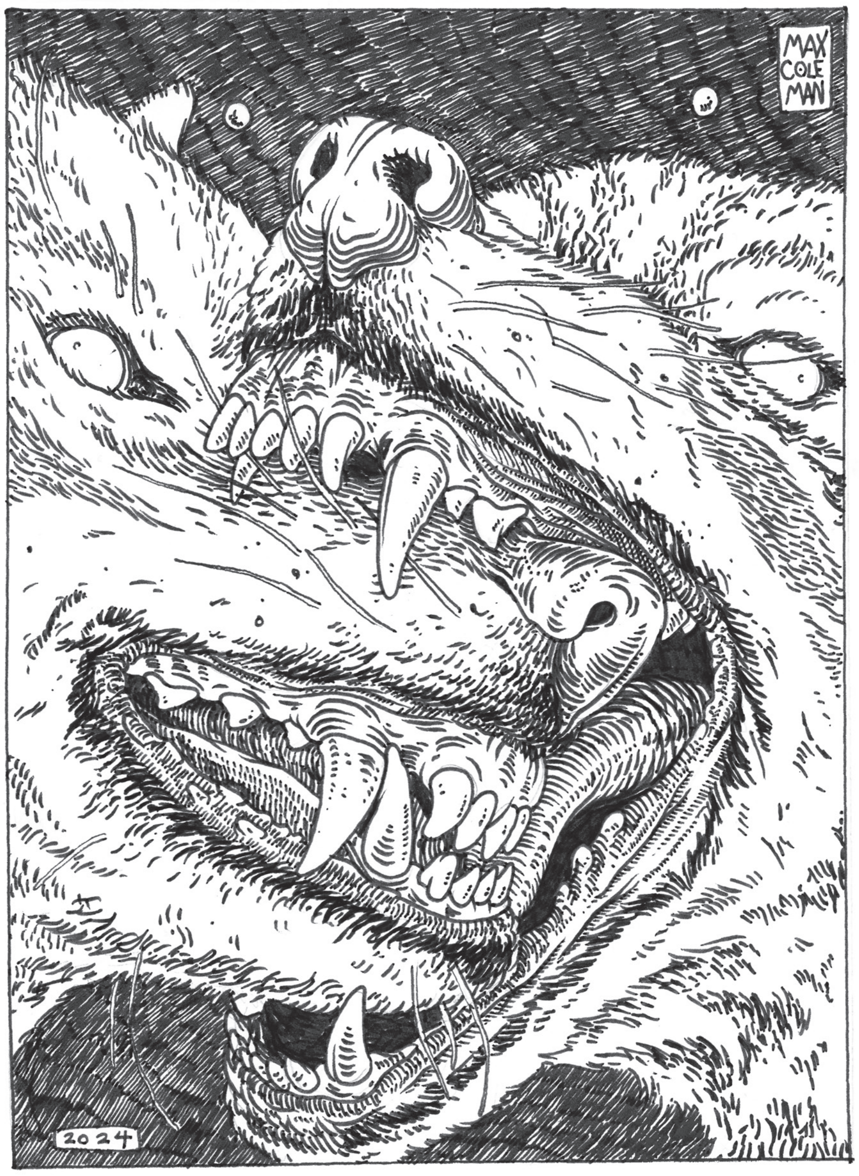
How my children softened him when they came,
loosened the stones between us.

How I looked my father in the eye like a man,
said I could make a life out of poems. Bullshit,
he said and probably right.

KAPITALISMUS

RODRIGO TOSCANO

"Debris of desires and ambitions
Into broken structures, settling, snuggly"
Is the working title. Here's another:
"Nope, not ceding to your speaking subject
Nor *any* subject, subaltern or not"
Now *that's* a zinger. Can it get more edge?
"Nothing to look at here about 'logic'
In the spawning of global slumps and cults"
Total cock block, though, pretty fit title.
"Why is your time being wasted? O comrade"
Is a lot shorter, and quite to the point.
"You *masticate* your failures during sleep"
That's pretty cray, right? What do you all think?
Do we need some neo-neo-punk shit?



MAX COLEMAN

SOUTHERN GOTHIC

MAURA MODEYA

age of incoherence
disavows complexity
disavows what a mind
might think, my mind
leads to desire
a compulsion to repeat
mirrors the personal plot
to the political
like you
I notice how the aura is alive
how the cultivation
of sanity is to train
your mind like a child
each day I await newness
and yet, each new aspect
of this city makes me slow
a dolphin at sunset
leaps out of the river
power in the sky
just earlier, as I was
in the water
a barge filled with weapons
left the marina
waves from its passing
created a surge
that dunked us under
water filled with salt and solar
we take to the unevenness
of the ordinary world
we ask each other
how many bodies
could stop an engine

FEATURED ARTIST

Zoe Keller is a visual artist based in Woodstock, New York. Her drawings of North American animals depict the electrifying space between predator and prey. Her work disarms the kind of reflexive denial that can drive human delusions of separation. "Life lives on life," wrote Jack London. But life is running out of life, and there is no blueprint for mourning a vanishing world. If the first act of love is attention, Keller's work devotes that attention. In addition to being part of the permanent collections at the National Museum of Wildlife Art and Zion National Park, her drawings have appeared in *Chronogram*, *North American Review*, and *Beautiful Bizarre*. She provided us with the center spread of this issue of *Fine Print* and talked with us about her creative process, growing up in the Catskill Mountains, and the importance of biodiversity.

Your drawing of the wildlife of Zena Woods is very moving. Can you talk about your relationship with this place?

I grew up in Woodstock, New York, across from an enormous, undeveloped tract of forest. I had no idea at the time how big it was; now I know it's well over 600 acres. It always had a sort of weighty presence. It was the place that all of the animals came out of or slipped into. Waves of tiny toadlets hopping up towards our house, enormous, lushly-coated bears passing silently through our yard and disappearing into the distant trees, hawks and Great Blue Herons swooping and calling and building nests. I took these experiences for granted as a kid, until I had been away and was living in cities and realized that I missed being surrounded by the life of the forest. I moved home last year, shortly after that 600-plus-acre forest sold to out-of-town developers. I've been spending a lot of my free time volunteering and helping to organize against the destruction of these woods for luxury housing. Knowing that the forest might be lost, I spent my first year home trying frantically to catalogue the biodiversity it might contain—a task I truly barely touched, as a non-scientist who could only get as close as the property line. This year, I've been trying to take what I observed and translate it into science communication pieces. The drawing "Biodiversity of the Zena Woods" is my favorite piece so far.

Like writing, drawing is a democratic art form, in that anyone with paper, pencil, and persistence can access it. The materials aren't prohibitively expensive, and they're easy to take outside, travel with. Do any of your drawings begin as sketches en plein air?

I really value the democratic nature of drawing as well. It's one of the reasons I spent so much time with pencil as a medium. It's affordable, familiar, portable, and doesn't require any specialized kind of studio space. *En plein air* sketching is one of those things that I feel like I should do to be a "real artist," but I've accepted that I just don't like doing it. Although I do love drawing, I have made it my job, and when I'm outside, I prefer to leave my job behind. Every moment spent looking at the paper of a sketchbook would be a moment lost looking at the world unfolding around me. So much can happen so quickly in the forest. So many of my favorite natural encounters in New York have been by chance. If I had been lost with my nose in a sketchbook, would I have seen the fisher bounding into the woods? Or the barred owl gliding silently overhead? Spending time away from my drawing tools makes me excited to return to them when I'm back in the studio.

Many of John J. Audubon's subjects were taxidermy specimens, already dead. Once you see it in his work, it's hard to "un-see" the blank stare of his birds. Can you talk more about the challenge of depicting the living spirit of animals?

My goal is to create drawings that tell non-human stories to a human audience. I do not want my drawings to focus on the aesthetics of wild organisms. I do not want to use wild organisms as symbols to tell stories about human emotions or experiences. When I think about capturing the "living spirit" of animals, I'm thinking about how I can impart to the viewer some piece of that animal's (or plant's or fungi's) story. How do they exist in their ecosystem? What threats are they facing? Who in their ecosystem would feel their absence if they were gone? I haven't always been successful in this, and some of my most popular pieces are ones that folks interpret in very surface-level, anthropocentric ways, but this is what I'm striving for.

Your animals aren't overly romanticized; some of them even seem troubled, on the verge of death, sex, or hunger. Did you ever have a moment in your relationship with nature where you realized it wasn't all Disney, all rosy sunsets? Can you share it with us?

That's just a part of growing up in a more rural place. Animals die and mate and poop and eat each other. Depicting those life cycles and relationships has always been a goal in my work. I think that drawing is uniquely suited to creating images that can tell the whole story: You can incorporate the things we humans easily find beautiful and the things we might initially consider dark or gross into a single image.

Your work is detailed, full of cross-hatched fur, slick scales, and downy feathers. Is there anything meditative about this work for you? What, if any, emotions come up for you in your process?

There are definitely parts of my process that are repetitive and give me time to think. I'm almost ten years into doing this full time, and I sometimes feel like my drawing hand is just doing its own thing without me really thinking about it. It's like driving a route that is so familiar that you get to your destination without even realizing it. I'm not good at meditation though. If I get to a point in my process that could be meditative, I'm immediately blasting a podcast. I have a 150-plus-hour podcast playlist that I'm working through right now, full of podcasts that focus on species or ecosystems or natural processes that can be found in eastern forests. At the end of the day, I'm not going to want to tell you about the fur that I drew; you're going to hear all about the diet of porcupines, or a program to combat Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, or how scientists get crayfish out of burrows to study them.

Spending so much time observing a subject can impact how you see it. Has drawing an animal (or vegetable, or bone, or mushroom) ever changed how you think about that organism in the long term?

Absolutely! That is inevitable. I don't think that you can draw something without falling at least a little bit in love with it. It's one of nature art's greatest gifts. The shift in perspective is why I try to incorporate organisms that aren't considered "charismatic megafauna" into my drawings. When you have spent a great deal of time and care depicting an animal, it encourages the viewer to think about that animal in a different way. Ideally, they will at least momentarily set aside their assumptions about an organism and reconsider it as an individual that is worthy of attention and patience and admiration. When I was doing more gallery shows (I have happily shifted my focus to editorial illustration), I really liked thinking of drawings as conversation starters. Snake drawings in particular sparked responses from viewers. If folks loved snakes or hated them, I heard about it. It gave me an opening to share even more stories about snakes in one-on-one conversations, beyond what I was able to depict in the drawings themselves.

What's it like balancing the slow, analog process of drawing with a fast, public-facing platform such as Instagram?

At the moment, not so bad. My career is really tied to social media, and how I have felt about this balance has depended on the whims of the Instagram algorithm. Pre-algorithmic feed, it wasn't too hard to snap a photo of what I was currently working on, throw it online, and keep the social media ball rolling. I hit a huge wall a few years ago, when Instagram really started pushing reels. I did try to adapt, but my work is so time-intensive, I realized I was not going to be able to hit the new Instagram targets of producing little videos of my work on a regular basis. I sort of braced myself and accepted that, because I couldn't keep up with the direction of social media; my jobs and sales were probably going to slow to a point where they eventually stopped, and I would have to switch careers. I went from posting every single day, something I had done for years, to posting once a week, which was infinitely more sustainable for me. I'm not sure what tweaks Instagram has been making to the algorithm, but it ended up working out alright. I've kept my social media presence afloat, and I am so much happier now that I am less online.

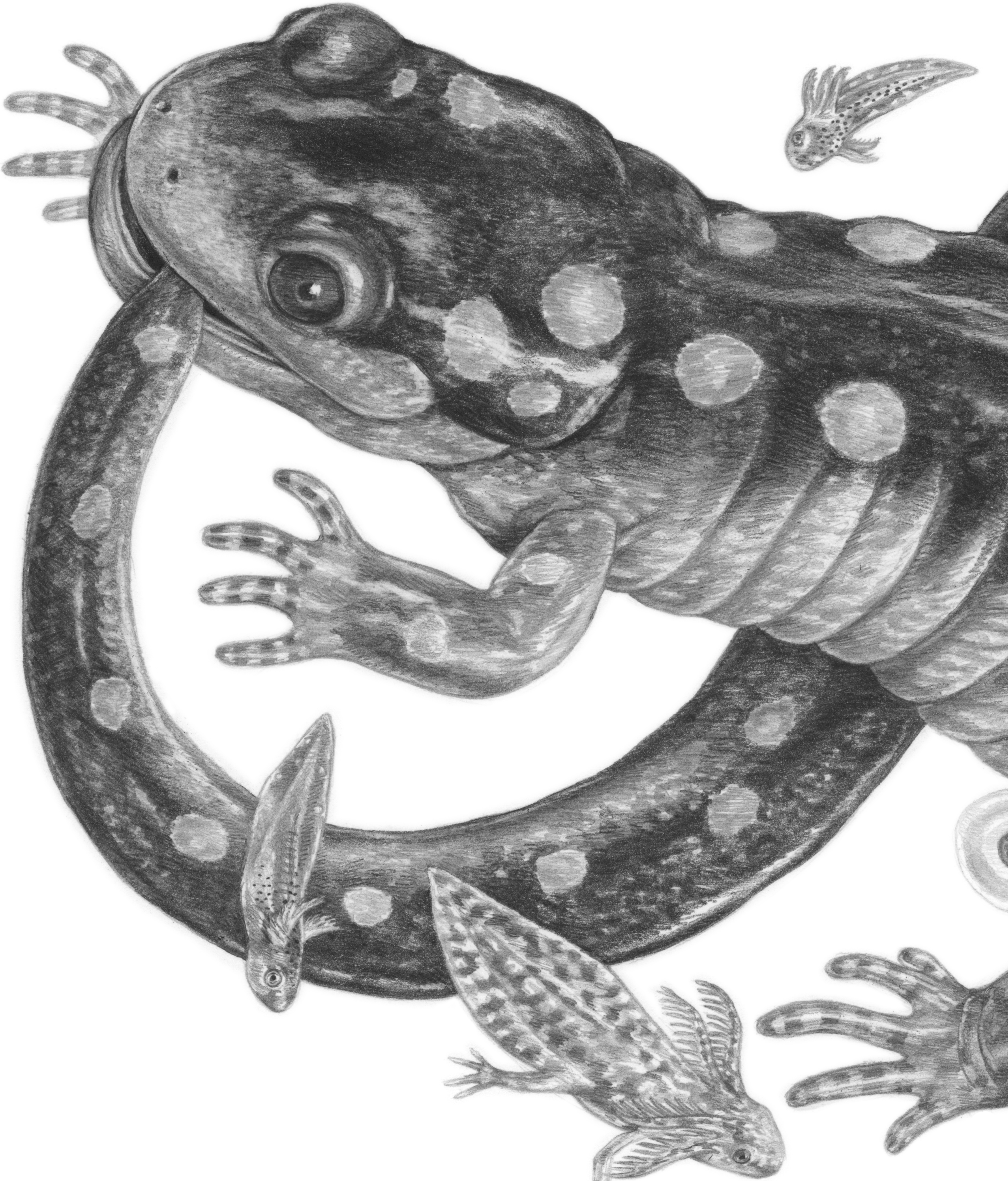
Your work can depict entire ecosystems. With so many details to consider, how do you know when a drawing is finished?

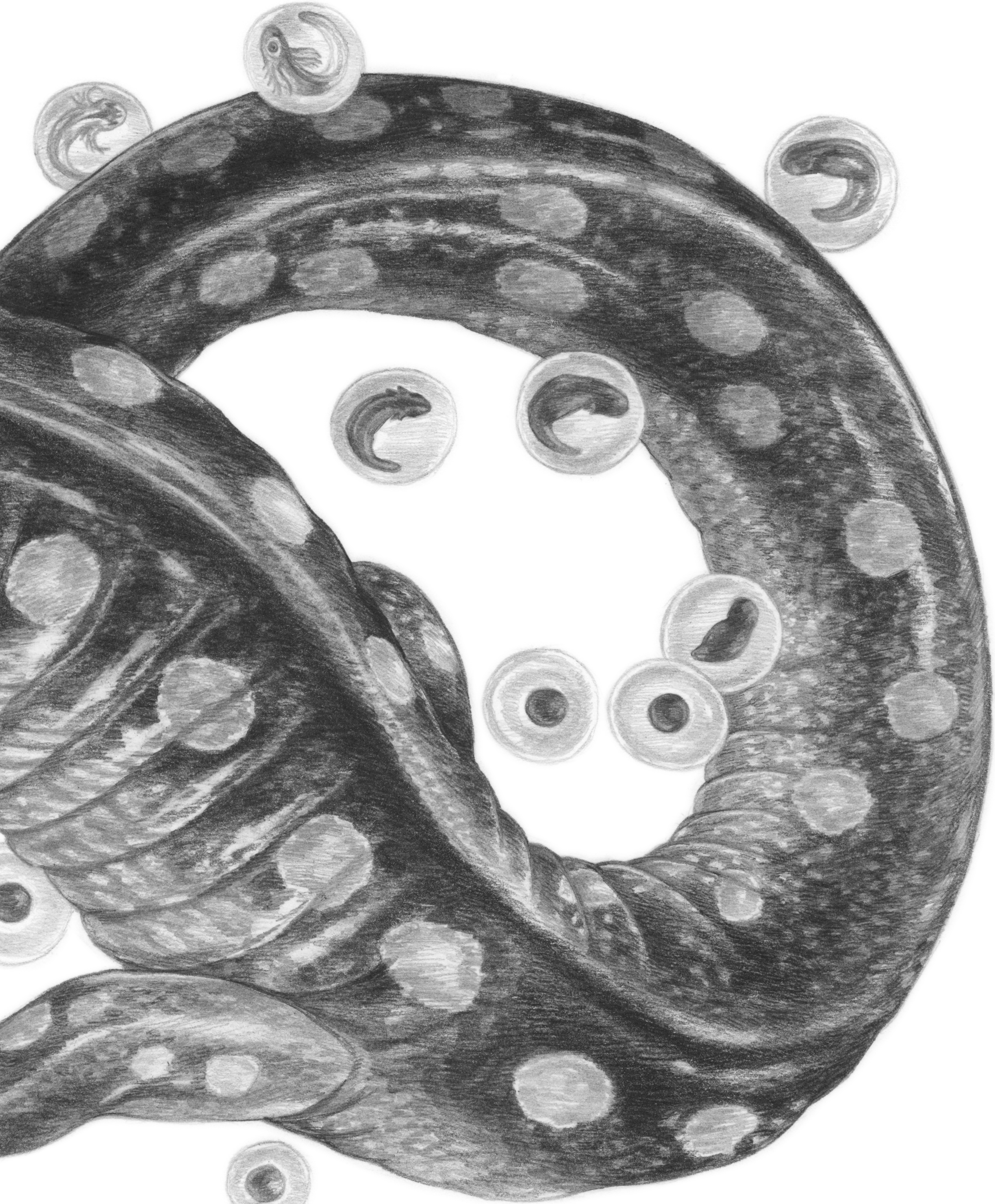
I think a drawing is finished when it doesn't have anything left to teach me. My mediums are pretty malleable. If I wanted to, I could work on most of my drawings for much longer than I do, but I have made peace with the fact that no drawing is perfect. When I come to a good stopping point with a drawing, there are always at least a couple of things that I would have done differently in terms of process or composition or rendering. Instead of losing myself in one piece, chasing those little problems, I allow myself to walk away from a drawing, with the understanding that I will do better with my next piece.

If you could give our readers one piece of advice for deepening their relationship to the natural world, what would you suggest?

I think it's important to remember that you don't have to travel (or move) to a pristine, remote place to connect with nature. One of my favorite bird-watching spots from the past few years was a little stream next to a grocery store parking lot. There were so many cool water birds, but there was a lot of garbage, too. The forest that I spend time in now is marked by centuries of human use. What nature, no matter how small or already altered by humans, do you pass now in your daily life? Who uses that space? How can you be a good steward of that bit of nature?

See more work by Zoe Keller at zoekeller.com





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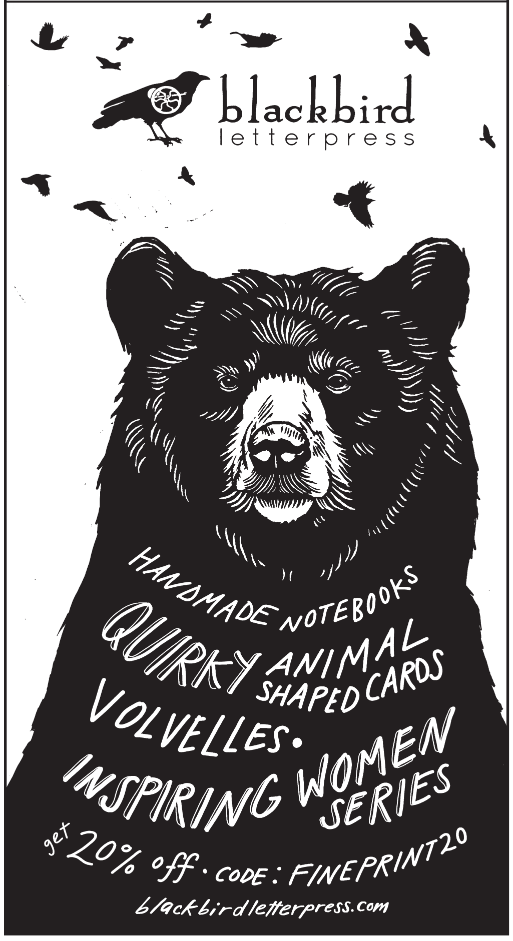

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LA POSICIÓN QUE ASUME EL CIELO

SEBASTIÁN GÓMEZ MATUS

cuando camino y me detengo
a establecer su posición de abandono.

Una posición en la que nada ni nadie
puede confirmar a otro.

La noche se cruza con un perro
perseguido por luz municipal.

Los pies equilibrados sobre el corazón
juntan un montoncito de tierra
para erigir una espina pródiga.

Una montaña capaz de interrumpir
el manto de las señales.

THE POSITION HEAVEN ASSUMES

TRANSLATED BY IAN U LOCKABY

when I walk and I stop
to establish its position of abandonment.

A position in which nothing and no one
can verify another.

The night crossed with a dog
pursued by municipal light.

Feet balanced on the heart
gather a little mound of earth
to erect a prodigal thorn.

A mountain capable of interrupting
the mantle of signals.

KILLDEER, PART II

TALIN TAHAJIAN

I tried the World and the World spit me back out.
What does that feel like? Get with it,
You're in its mouth, it's trying to blow you. I saw a riddle written
Down one time, now I'm naked, I'm the edge, I'm vacuum-sealed, I'm the citrusy
Crucifixion According to Matthew Is a Sexual Message
Fumes wandering around at the gateway to Hell,
Look at me. My poems aren't good enough. How the fuck did I get trapped
Here where I have nothing. All my crystals are split. Listening is rape.

(AFTER HURRICANE HELENE)

BRITT DIBARTOLO

You dug the shit trench, I took two hydroxozines.

Zach's dad traded a case of water for a case of warm beer
He gave me one

I took a sip for every Red Cross van that passed us by
their drivers   waving.

We watched as the French Broad swelled   then snapped
we watched our drug dealer conduct wellness checks

I found a shrew with crawfish eyes in the second story gutter,
you saw a tree wearing a t-shirt and pants

I crushed ticks with the stupid moons of my useless manicure,
you paced madly   behind cadaver dogs through ruined coffee shops and skate parks.

Deer laid on the side of the road in a deranged sleep
the neighbor said she saw a sink hole   with teeth

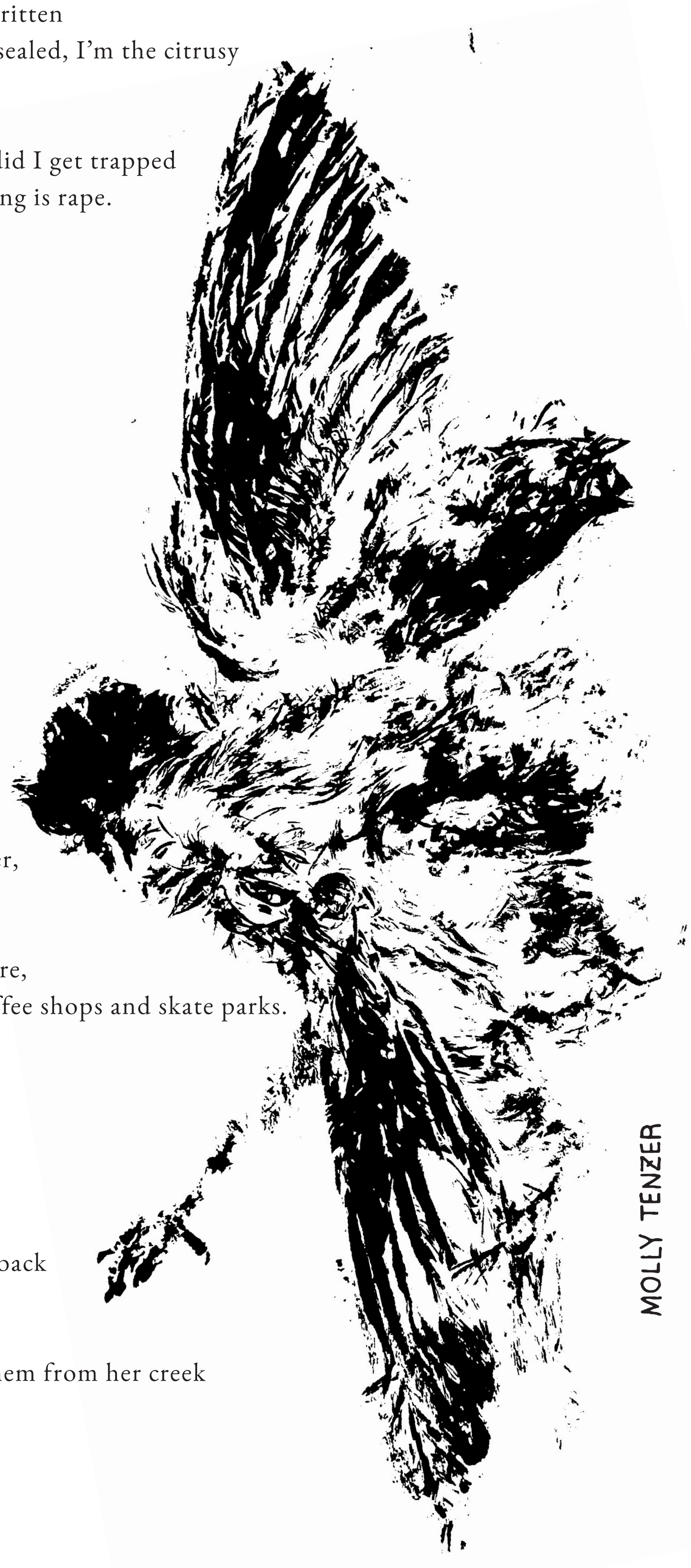
before she left last road left out of town.

Jeph skitched a ride with us, two chainsaws strapped to his back
last I heard he was living in a tree with a broken arm.

Saige found some old Gatorade Zero bottles   filled them from her creek
spared our weary asses   my kingdom for a drop

for a flush bucket   how long we made make do but
I wasn't counting   anymore, nor asking

why how   on earth   this storm how there's no metaphor for it.
How you chucked a stick   into the river. How it sunk.



MOLLY TENZER

FEATURED AUTHOR

Carolyn Supinka is a visual artist and writer living in Portland, Oregon. She is co-editor of Conjunction Press and the author of *Metamorphic Door* (Buckman Publishing, 2024), a collection of poetry and poetry comics. She provided us with a previously unpublished poem for this issue of *Fine Print* and talked with us about how her visual art and writing intersect, resisting fatalism, and how time and form can be disrupted or reimagined.

Textbook, manual, graphic novel, notebook—the format of your work morphs as it unfolds. How did you arrive at this format?

The form came from the content. A lot of the poems are about seasons, the natural world. The section titles are animal, mineral, atmosphere and synapse—and the index, of course. So I used this kind of framework, which feels very naturalist-adjacent, like a taxonomy, to organize the work.

The book is suffused with an eeriness—even the "normal" moments—which is both terrifying and deeply funny. Does this comfort with fluidity, the toggling between gravity and lightness, make it easier to examine the sense of impending doom, or is there so much consistent disaster that these poems are just processing it, just managing through it?

That sense of eeriness relates to how I approached this book as interrogating time. Time and our place in it, or myself as the poetic speaker's place in it, is something that I'm constantly circling in my writing and my work. I think it's an obsession. That definitely informs how the thought process of these poems unfolds. Thinking about time and layering is really evident in the visuals, too. A lens through which I think about the comics is a palimpsest—the idea of a document that was scraped and reused. It speaks to time and transformation, like the metamorphic door, something that's constantly evolving or transforming. I feel I must have an understanding and an awareness of time to operate as an artist. It expands your sense of scale, making you feel both insignificant, this little blip, but also part of a larger whole.

Why poetry comics? How do words and images intersect for you?

I liked the idea of these comics disrupting a sense of time. Comics are a sequence of images experienced over time. And I love the idea of comics as a way to articulate moments—controlling that as a creator was really compelling. You do that in poetry too, with line breaks, rhythm, meter. But the way visuals provided another dimension expanded the possibilities for me and got me thinking about how comics could function poetically. For example, some of the panels in my comics where there's no text—how does that operate as a beat or pause? How does the flow of a visual arrangement of images operate as an escalation or a reference? You can have repeating images in comics, so what does it mean if you see a word, but then it repeats as an image later on? There's either a dissonance or a return. Expanding and exploring poetry comics and hybrid works helped me reengage my interest in comics and poetry, and it's where a lot of my interest is right now as an artist, in that kind of in-between space. The word "comics" is a gesture toward the sense of play and humor that I like. "Graphics" somehow feels a little bit more serious. "Comics" references sequential images and text. The use of the word "comics" at least gives me a framework in which I can then either go against or work within that tradition.

How did you choose what to include in the index of the book? For example, "geese" are missing, though they appear in the book several times, but Bruce Springsteen appears only once (in a poetry comic). Some of the defined terms ("anthropocene," "hadal," "karst") are natural choices. Others ("antlers," "inglenook," "monument") are slightly unusual choices—either words people know or would consider "poem words" and move on.

I want to give full props to my editor, Emmi Greer, with Buckman Publishing, who was an incredible collaborator in shaping this book. In reviewing early manuscripts, we started talking about indexes, and it was her idea to ask, "Would this be helpful?" I started thinking about it as a tool for readers because I did a lot of informal research. When approaching projects, I love to go to the library and just get everything. And Emmi was like, "Okay, but is there ever a moment when using this language might disrupt the reader's experience? Do we want to offer a definition, which isn't traditionally a thing that indexes do?" I liked including some of what I was consuming and what I was producing, having that kind of feedback loop. But then, whenever I use a form, I love to mess with it. If I were to do an index straight-faced, it would have felt like a missed opportunity. Taxonomy or classification and the language of definition comes up in the book and in a lot of popular writing about science and nature. I like the idea of disrupting that with which words are chosen. Maybe it's not the most important word. Maybe it's a word that surprises you. Maybe it's not only a tool to give greater access or insight, but also to surprise and to subvert. I like taking advantage of these moments to create further poems, to use the index as a form for poetry. I was really excited by it, and I got to do it in some of those sections.

There's an undercurrent of hopeful creative energy in this book. What does this mean for you—is it generative, natural, part of what makes you real? Or is it an external drive, something else?

I really resist fatalism. I don't point to time and expanse and think, "So what's the point? Nothing matters." I don't think that's true. I do think that sometimes there's the impulse to think, "So why create?" But that's where I find beauty in the world, and I can't stop creating. I'm drawn to people who need to make something, amidst all this. And whether it's beautiful or heartbreaking, I am in awe of that impulse and also kind of afraid of and sometimes exhausted by it. I sometimes build my identity around that, too, as somebody who's always working on something. But I really can't stop. There's also a parallel path to this, which is asking questions you're never going to get the answers to. That's why I love the central image of the metamorphic door—it's a portal to something, whether that's the answer or access to something, but the door, the way, keeps changing. It's always going to change. Your understanding and position will always be transforming. Sometimes the ground will just dissolve under you. I create art to process my understanding of the world and to explore the connections I find within it, but it can feel so fast sometimes that it's overwhelming.

Are you the goose? Is the goose you?

No, but I do think the goose is my counterpart—my poetry comic accomplice, my natural poetic voice that I've noticed in this book and in other work. I'm talking to something. That thing responds, and usually it's me talking back. I wasn't drawn to the goose consciously. It's an everyday animal. It's not very glamorous, but it's easy to draw. It's also a weird bird. What are you doing with that neck? It's also a creature I associate with seasonal fluctuations, an endless cycle of return. There's a couple of geese that are in stages of transformation at three points in the book. I like the idea of the goose operating as my poetic counterpart or my shadow self, popping up to engage with transformation.

IT'S NOT THAT YOUR SADNESS IS HOLY BUT THAT EVERYONE'S IS

The night before we saw the wild ponies
Stand silent on the beach
How I knew then
That nothing was permanent
In a way since I've forgotten, I guess

Borrowing a shirt to go look for salamanders
The first and only one I found
Heavy as a river stone and colder
The Greeks thought they could live in fire but
Never proved it

Daily I interact with power
Against my wishes
Asking is this the price
For existing in the world

The AI search spitting out
Taxidermied results, opening the pen
Of possibility

The move was long and difficult to fund
I ran into a cloud of digital miasma
I lost my clothes
I bathed naked and surveilled
And found it in myself not to care

Under the slanted ceiling, we traded colloquialisms
Believed in the science that the absurd
Can articulate experience
Most keenly
How Jesus lost his shoes
And the circus its monkeys
How hope is like a name, or a dart
Flung at a target, you pray it'll stick

See more work by Carolyn Supinka at carolyn-supinka.squarespace.com

LETTERS TO THE ELEMENTS

BY DYLAN KRIEGER

♈

dear simulation: your problem is an ancient one—the cave carved out of heavy stone, the shadow people, the grand mirage that floats inside your fleshy eye. your conclusion is solipsistic, platonic, cartesian, only a single epistemic layer deep: you can't trust anything except yourself. and yet, where else do simulations play out? what else renders the whole spectrum of cartoon colors at gunpoint? no, even you cannot be trusted right now to discern the stage light from the sun.

♉

dear flat earth: what's most frustrating is that depth is actually your strong suit. you can handle a right angle for the sake of engineering, but an organic curve is clearly more seductive—truer to your purposes. before it's too late, you'd like to escape all the world's boxes like a magic trick, but you forget the auditorium itself, the podium before you, one day the grave—honey, it's boxes all the way down. flattening is unavoidable. but for now, avoid ruminating on such monotony. let one beautiful thing remain round.

♊

dear unreal birds: behind your eyes is a trained spy on a mission to rewrite future history, a messenger-soldier, a nesting instinct homing in on a landmine. pigeons remain nearly domesticated, you know—urban, dependent, too trusting. you may blend in among them just fine on the street, but remember there is more to you than a pet or a pest. from the dream in which you're flying too fast, there are words that can wake you like a sleeper agent. listen for them, especially at night.

♋

dear grassy knoll: you've seen too much not to cry sometimes—the throngs of maladapted hopefuls, the ring-out, the ricochet, a single shooter curling reality against itself. you've seen things that don't make sense, that will never make sense, no matter how many documents attempt to explain death. you've felt yourself becoming another patsy, fate's fall guy, doomed to be blamed for everything history hides in its trench coat. but this story underestimates your ultimate power. hint: when it isn't raining, put down the umbrella.

♌

dear chemtrails: there is a serpentarium along the eastern seaboard whose lobby features a year-round exhibit about you. a clear sky renders your trajectory all too visible to lucid truthers, who stop and point at your presence dissipating into eerie absence. you should be used to this by now, but it never gets easier to digest: health is a myth or, insofar as it exists, dissipates just like this. you can smile at the awestruck fanfic of your devotees, but remember: all your performance helps them deny is themselves.

♍

dear cloud seed: people say you seek control, but that's only part of the story—a single drop of the downpour of means and ends you represent. no, it's not control for control's sake that you seek. it's the cornucopia that comes from storm season, the harvest that will nourish whole nations come winter. if you feel misunderstood right now, clarify why cloud cover needs your help. and if you can't say, stand back. let your naysayers find out for themselves.

♎

dear moon landing: when it comes to your lore, there is so much to brag about—the sheer accomplishment of making it this far, the televised inspiration, the first step on the surface of the largest oysterless pearl. like a folksy roadside attraction, you are so comforting, it borders on suspicious. take the time to internalize this: you look too perfect not to have been directed by kubrick. take this as a compliment. no, really: think about the beauty it takes to fool a discerning public. think about how you wouldn't have it any other way.

♏

dear backmasking: to your great disappointment, people always find you. to your great dismay, there is someone reminded of you by every song. at the end of the album, when everything gets quiet, they wait in silence for the hidden track, the secret coda, the upside-down attack on so-called expectation. if you don't deliver, they might react like a sad christmas. if you do, others will call you the devil. when there's no way to win, free yourself from the external gaze. sure, they'll find you, but not yet. relish that.

♐

dear illuminati airport: sometimes the rumor mill becomes unbearable—people say you killed a man, or that there's something sinister lurking under your surface, waiting for the apocalypse, maybe even accelerating it. but there's nothing wrong with liking creepy horses. your best skill is your ability to lean into the joke, even if it's on you. when you can't be the author of your own story, laugh along at your own roast instead. your time will come to roast back.

♑

dear microchip of the beast: just when it feels like the world couldn't get any smaller, you emerge from the scorched earth, a ten-headed horror, holy with fresh-hatched plans for a feral future. but despite your clarity of vision, you must resist the urge to homogenize reality by making everyone a little more like yourself. silicon can only go so far; the rest is out of your eldritch hands—and for good reason. keep your books of so-called revelations close to the chest.

♒

dear aliens: no one knows exactly how you got here. in fact, there are differing opinions about whether you're here at all. you seem so far removed sometimes, people might imagine you as either angel or demon, but both would be wrong. as hard as it is to accept, you are flesh and blood like the rest of us, a mind with or without a hive, an unidentified obstruction to offshore tourists wearing cheap binoculars. relish your weirdness all you want, but remember it's always relative to which planet, which periscope, which camera could finally catch you unblurred.

♓

dear inside job: you haven't forgotten anything—not the wallpaper, not the square footage of the garden, not the worm bits in the dirt under your fingernails. you can't forget, because you yourself fell right alongside the paradise you had created and then set aflame. change has a way of inspiring you, of calling you to action when otherwise you might capitulate. but you should learn to draw the line at causing tragedies; no seventh reinvention is worth your self-destruction. no pledged allegiance is worth the death of worlds.

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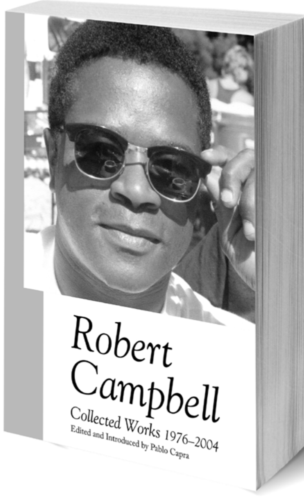

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Collected Works 1976–2004
Edited and Introduced by Pablo Capra

Robert Campbell (1951–2004) was a Texas artist who worked as a scenic painter in Hollywood. His poetry mesmerized the downtown L.A. scene, but was sparsely published. This *Collected Works* remedies that.

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